Stem cell research

3450. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the discussions with policy-makers and science-administrators in Singapore and South Korea on the prospects for collaboration in the area of stem cell research were held at the ministerial level, recently;

(b) if so, the details of issues discussed in the meeting;

(c) the outcome thereof;

(d) whether India had set objective to emerge as a global hub for stem cell research;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether Government have initiated the process of mutual recognition of doctors, nurses and dentists under the recently signed India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement; and

(g) if so, the complete details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (c) A delegation led by Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare recently visited Korea and Singapore. The delegation met the Korean Minister of Health and discussed future areas of collaboration, including stem cell research, between India and Korea. Letters of intent have also been received from Histo Stem Inc., Korea and Histo Stem Inc., Dclaware, USA wherein it is proposed to set up Cord Blood Stem Cell Banking network in India to store stem cells as well as to coordinate research for the development of Stem Cell therapies to treat various malignancies and diseases.

(d) and (e) India has emerged as one of the major countries involved in Stem.

Cell Research. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Department of Bio-Technology are promoting stem cell research. Around 15 institutes and 3 premier health centres in the country are involved in stem cell research and related activities funded by different funding agencies

like Department of Science and Technology, Department of Bio-Technology and ICMR. Some of these institutes are:

- The Institute of Immunohaematology, Mumbai under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) undertaking peripheral blood stem cell therapy in aplastic anaemia patients;
- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi involved in clinical studies on stem cell therapies particularly in cardiovascular diseases;
- The L.V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad successful in transplanting a stem cell derived cornea to a patient who had lost his cornea;
- the National Brain Research Centre, Gurgaon involved extensively on neural stem cell useful in several congenital and acquired disorder, including Parkinson's disease;
- the National Centre for Cell Sciences, Pune has been working on developing a repository of cell cultures and cell lines, cryo-preservation technology for bone marrow and development of skin for burns and vitiligo patients.

The ICMR has also informed that considering the wider acceptability of umbilical cord blood stem cell, they are also setting up various blood stem cell banks. Reliance Life Science established sought Asia's first Umbilical Cord Blood Repository in June, 2000. Recently Asia Cryo-cell in collaboration with Florida based Cryo-cell International has set up India's first Umbilical Cord Blood Stem Bank with 24 collection centres across the country near Chennai. The ICMR has also proposed to establish Cord Blood Stem Cell Banks in seven regional centres with coordinating unit at ICMR's Institute of Immunohaematology (IIH), Mumbai.

(f) and (g) In the recently signed India—Singapore Comprehensive Economic and Cooperation Agreement (CECA) there is a provision for negotiating and concluding Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) in Medical, Dental and Nursing Services.